

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4689

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, OECD

SUBJECT: DATA ON SPEED LIMIT/HIGHWAY FATALITIES

DOT FOR ENGLE

1. EMBASSY CONTACTED MR. J. R. WILKINS OF THE ROAD SAFETY DIRECTORATE, RSTL-2, ROOM C-18/06, DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, 2 MARSHAM ST., WESTMINSTER, LONDON SW1 P3EB, TELEPHONE 212-4448, WHICH IS THE OFFICE IN THE UK RESPONSIBLE FOR STUDIES ON SPEED LIMITS AND HIGHWAY FATALITIES. MR. WILKINS INDICATES THAT BRITISH GOVERNMENT WOULD BE HAPPY TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION RE CORRELATION BETWEEN LOWER HIGHWAY SPEED LIMITS AND REDUCED AUTO FATALITIES.

2. UK TRANSPORT AND ROAD RESEARCH LABORATORY HAS STUDIES UNDERWAY OF AUTO FATALITY RATES. THEY HAVE NOT COMPLETED THEIR STUDIES, BUT THEIR EARLY CONCLUSIONS ARE THAT DECREASES IN SPEED LIMITS IN THE UK RESULTED IN MARKED FALLS IN HIGHWAY FATALITIES INITIALLY, BUT THAT THE STATISTICS OVER TIME HAVE CLIMBED BACK TO THE TREND LINE. UK FIRST IMPLEMENTED A UNIVERSAL 50 MPH LIMIT ON ALL ROADS FOLLOWING THE OIL EMBARGO IN NOVEMBER 1973. THIS SEVERE SPEED LIMIT WAS RELAXED IN THE EARLY SPRING OF 1974 SO THAT SPEED LIMITS RETURNED TO THE UNIVERSAL 70 MPH SPEED LIMIT ADOPTED IN 1965. NEW SPEED LIMITS WERE ESTABLISHED IN NOVEMBER 1974 AS A LONG-TERM ENERGY CONSERVATION MEASURE. THESE WERE 70 MPH ON SUPER HIGHWAYS, 60 MPH ON

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DUAL CARRIAGE WAYS, AND 50 MPH ON TWO LANE HIGHWAYS.

FATALITIES MARKEDLY DECREASED FOLLOWING BOTH THE NOVEMBER 1973 AND 1974 IMPOSITION OF SPEED LIMITS, BUT IN BOTH CASES STATISTICS TENDED TO CLIMB IN THE FOLLOWING MONTHS. IN ADDITION TO ITS STUDIES OF HIGHWAY STATISTICS, THE TRANSPORT AND ROAD RESEARCH LABORATORY HAS BEEN CARRYING OUT A CENSUS OF OBSERVANCE OF SPEED LIMITS AT 49 POINTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, AND EXPECTS TO HAVE THE RESULTS OF THIS CENSUS TO USE IN ITS STUDIES WITHIN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS.

3. EMBASSY WOULD RECOMMEND THAT DOT COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY WITH UK DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT FOR PRECISE STATISTICS.

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